

Dick Lugar

U.S. Senator for Indiana

Date: 05/25/2010 • <http://lugar.senate.gov>
Andy Fisher • 202-224-2079 • andy_fisher@lugar.senate.gov

Opening Statement for Hearing on the New START Treaty

U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Dick Lugar made the following statement at today's hearing.

I join Chairman Kerry in welcoming our distinguished witness, former Secretary of State and National Security Advisor Dr. Henry Kissinger.

Last week, the Foreign Relations Committee received testimony on the New START Treaty from Secretaries Gates and Clinton and Admiral Mullen, and former Secretary of State James Baker. In April, we heard from former Defense Secretaries James Schlesinger and William Perry. Our witnesses have expressed the common view that while there are questions to be answered about the treaty and our broader nuclear posture, a decision not to ratify the treaty would forego an opportunity and exacerbate the broader challenges to U.S. foreign policy.

Our hearings on the New START Treaty come at a time when we are witnessing fundamental changes in U.S. strategic planning. In addition to consideration of the Treaty, this Committee is studying the full meaning of the new Nuclear Posture Review. Moreover, the treaty has coincided with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review conference underway in New York; Iran's continued pursuit of nuclear programs; the development of a new Strategic Concept for NATO; and discussions related to the Ballistic Missile Defense Review. The New START Treaty has been, both directly and indirectly, linked to each of these issues, and the Senate's decision on START will reverberate throughout our strategic relationships worldwide.

The New START Treaty follows a period when we have had severe disagreements with Russia. Russian actions related to Iran, Afghanistan, and North Korea, for example, often have exhibited a reflexive resistance to U.S. positions even when we have substantial commonality of interest. Russia's repeated use of energy exports as a political weapon and its treatment of Ukraine and Georgia demonstrate a hard line on regional issues. In this context, we should avoid ratcheting between excessive expectations and severe disappointment in our attitude towards Russia. We also should avoid the idea that the New START Treaty can reset our relationship with Russia on its own.

But recent difficulties in the U.S.-Russian relationship make the New START Treaty more important, not less. Distancing ourselves from nuclear engagement with Russia would greatly reduce our knowledge of what is happening in Russia, hinder our ability to consult with Moscow in a timely manner on nuclear and national security issues, further strain our own defense resources, weaken our non-proliferation diplomacy worldwide, and, potentially, heighten arms competition.

As Secretary Baker said last week, "Despite ups and downs in relations between Washington and Moscow over the last 18 years, START ensured strategic stability between the United States and Russia." Dr. Kissinger, I hope that you will elaborate on what role such treaties play in our relationship with Moscow, as well as in sustaining U.S. influence worldwide.

Beyond Russia, we must think strategically about how we hope to shape the world in an era when developed nations are contending with an explosion of debt that limits the resources they are willing to apply to

international problems, even as opponents practice asymmetrical warfare that is expensive to combat and terrorist cells seek weapons of mass destruction. Meanwhile, the systemic risks to the global economic system have increased sharply in recent years due to the debt situation and the growing fragility of energy, food, and water supplies, which are likely to be the subject of increasing international conflict. In such an environment, few security problems will be solved by increasing U.S. defense expenditures.

Our margins for error in preventing nuclear proliferation in the coming decades will be especially narrow. Reaching common ground on START provides some foundation for continuing U.S.-Russian cooperation on reducing the nuclear, chemical and biological dangers facing the world. The NPT is under stress from the actions of Iran and North Korea and the concerns of neighboring countries. The Treaty is also contending with the complications that arise out of an expansion of global interest in nuclear power. The national security of both Russia and the United States will suffer if the world experiences a breakdown of the non-proliferation regime. Unless the United States and Russia provide strong leadership in this area, the coming surge in demand for nuclear power will lead more and more nations to seek their own enrichment facilities. If non-nuclear weapons states opt for major nuclear power programs and their own fuel-making capabilities, they could produce enough nuclear material for thousands of nuclear bombs. This could generate a raft of new nuclear weapons states, exponentially increase the threat of nuclear terrorism, and provoke highly destabilizing arms races.

The New START Treaty, by itself, cannot address these threats. But without a strategic nuclear treaty with Russia and all the consultations and transparency measures that come with it, we will have very little hope of tackling the more acute security problems that confront both our nations.

We are very fortunate to have Dr. Kissinger with us today to examine the New START Treaty, our relationship with Russia, and the broader strategic environment that we are attempting to shape. I look forward to his insights and our discussion.

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